Personal Care Attendant Quality

Home Care Workforce Council

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# Personal Care Attendant Quality Home Care Workforce Council

Council Meeting

Emergency Session

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| Minutes | January 12th, 2021 | 11:00-11:30 a.m. |  | Zoom Conference Call |

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| coUNCIL members in attendance | Lauren Peters, Christopher Hoeh, Kristen McCosh, Tim Kunzier, Ann Ackil, Joe Tringali,  |
| Council members not in attendance | Janet Rico, Cindy Purcell, Karen Shack |
|  Staff attending | Lisa Marshke, Leanne Winchester, Sherri Hannigan, Jarred Damico, Jeff Clausen, Julian Smith |
|  chair | Lauren Peters |
| Note taker | Amy Bianco |
| agenda setting | No issues were added to previously-issued agenda |

Lauren Peters called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Lauren identified a quorum and proceeded to that the recently passed Consolidated Appropriations Act (CCA) included an extension of paid sick leave as a voluntary benefit. As the employer, the PCA Council must vote whether to extend.

Chris Hoeh thanked Lauren and the council for quickly convening the emergency meeting.

Lauren shared background on the Federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFRCA) noting that the original provision allowed for up to two week paid sick leave time effective April 1, 2020 to December 31st, 2020. The recently passed CCA of 2021 extended the employer tax credits used to fund the paid sick leave benefit and voluntarily provided to employees until March 31, 2021. As a result, from January 1, 2021 through March 31, 2021, employers may extend the time in which an employee can utilize the FFCRA’s sick leave benefit. Lauren clarified that this does not expand the amount of paid sick leave that an employee could take under the FFCRA but instead extends the time period of when it can be used. The cost will continue to be federally funded via continuation of the associated employer tax credit.

Lauren stated that in its role as the employer for collective bargaining purposes, the PCA Council must determine whether to extend the sick leave program through March 31, 2021. Lauren placed a motion to extend, allowing for PCAs that may not have used their sick leave time to do so until March 31st.

Lauren opened the floor for questions and discussion.

Joe Tringali asked whether consumers have express difficulty in finding PCAs to cover when their PCA uses sick leave time. In response, Jarred Damico described the low utilization rate of sick time for FFCRA over the last 9 months, including data between April through October. He noted a spike in late spring that corresponded with the communication of the benefit. Jarred anticipated that utilization may spike again after the extension. Jarred added that out of the five allowable reasons for when a PCA can take paid sick leave, 50% of PCAs did so after being advised to quarantine by a healthcare provider. Jarred suggested there may be an issue finding PCAs, but that this FFCRA extension would provide that additional financial support for the PCAs who may have to quarantine amongst other reasons. Joe agreed with extending FFCRA sick leave despite the acknowledgment of difficulty in finding PCAs. Lauren emphasized that there are certain requirements that must be met before a PCA can utilize paid sick time under this benefit.

Kristen McCosh asked how this extension will affect PCA sick time for 2021. Chris asked if this extension granted additional hours to what was provided in 2020. Jarred clarified that the extension does not provide additional hours, but rather extends the allowable time period PCAs may take paid sick leave if a balance remains.

Chris asked if FFCRA sick time could be reported on a separate timesheet to distinguish from regular sick leave and paid time off. Jarred explained that there is a separate timesheet for FFCRA sick time. The FI will then review and determine how many hours of FFCRA the PCA is eligible for.

Chris asked if this has been communicated to the FIs and the Union. Sherri Hannigan responded confirming that all three FIs and the Union received links to each FI FFCRA sick time sheet and associated forms. Jarred added that if the Council approves the extension, MassHealth will proceed with issuing additional communications. Ann Ackil asked how the consumers will be notified. Jarred explained that the FIs and PCMs would communicate to the consumers. Jarred added that MassHealth will discuss at upcoming meetings with both the FIs and PCMs.

Kristen asked if there are any forms that need to be signed. Jarred noted that the only required signature is on the separate timesheet.

Joe asked Jarred to ask the FIs and PCMs whether they received a letter from the COVID-19 Command Center regarding vaccine information for consumers and PCAs. Jarred confirmed that the FIs and PCMs received the letter on Friday January 8th. Lauren noted that these communications were also sent to the council.

With no further questions, Lauren offered the motion that the PCA Workforce Council authorize the extension of the sick leave benefit provided under the Families First Coronavirus Response Act through March 31, 2021. Joe seconded and the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Lauren thanked the council for joining the emergency meeting on short notice.

Chris suggested that, when MassHealth distribute the updated info to PCAs and Consumers and ensure that a link is provided to the correct FFCRA timesheet. Jarred confirmed that he will ask the FIs to review where the link is kept and identify proper placement. Chris suggested that the link be placed on the timesheet page. Sherri noted that the link is included on the FI homepage with instructions in both English and Spanish.

With no other agenda items for discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Bianco